

LIBRARY HANDBOOK, No. 8

HOW TO CHOOSE EDITIONS

BY

WILLIAM E. FOSTER

Providence Public Library

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

MARTHA T. WHEELER

New York State Library

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION PUBLISHING BOARD
78 EAST WASHINGTON STREET, CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION

At no time does the young librarian feel his limitations more than when suddenly called upon to decide which among many editions of a famous classic he should order. Even with the books before him, he is often in doubt what standards to apply in estimating them, what qualities should be insisted upon as essentials, what defects he may forgive as of secondary importance. He knows whether the physical appearance of a particular volume is pleasing to him, but he can not always discern the specific qualities which contribute to the satisfactory effect, and he is not confident that his taste and judgment would be approved by more experienced book lovers or book custodians. These things come by observation, but meantime, who will aid him? There is but little in print that will serve. The short introductory section entitled "What is a good edition?" in Humphreys's *Private Library* is suggestive and practical, and George French's *Printing in Relation to Graphic Art* is illuminating in its discussion of the higher requirements in book making, but neither covers completely the needs of the inexperienced, nor are these books likely to be found on the shelves of the smaller libraries. The most specific consideration, from the standpoint of the librarian, of the points involved in choosing readable and attractive

editions, is that prepared by Mr. William E. Foster as a part of a paper published in the *Monthly Bulletin* of the Providence Public Library for October, 1898, in which he sets forth the aims of the Standard Library installed in a room specially devoted to it in the new building of the Providence Public Library, and explains the considerations which have influenced him in selecting editions to represent the chosen authors. In this collection, representing the best literature only and intended for the reader rather than the student, many editions excellent from the point of view of the teacher or the circulation desk were inappropriate. Mr. Foster distinctly recognizes this and guards against misapprehension in his clear statement of essentials. This paper has long been out of print and has heretofore only been accessible in libraries wise enough to have secured and preserved the *Providence Monthly Bulletin*.

HOW TO CHOOSE EDITIONS

The six points of selection are the following, and they are named in the order in which they should stand: (1) Text (whether unabridged or not), (2) editor, (3) size, (4) type, (5) paper and ink, (6) binding.

1. Text. One of the questions which must be satisfactorily answered, under this head, is whether the edition purports to include the unabridged work. If not, does it, on the one hand, eliminate or expurgate a word here and there, or, on the other, comprise fragmentary "selections" only? From the point of view which we are considering, the unabridged is the only form in which the author's works should be admitted. If any question of expurgation comes in, it is far better that the practice should be one of complete exclusion rather than that of partial omissions. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that this will be a real question, and will not always be decided in the affirmative nor always in the negative. Shakespeare and the English Bible may be named as instances on one side of the line, and instances on the other side will readily occur to every one. In the second place, even if the work should purport to be a complete and accurate edition of the author, it may fail of being that, through carelessness in the proof-reading or for some other reason. Thus, an edition of

Milton printed in 1851, contains certain almost incredible typographical errors. Other things being equal, we may usually expect a work to fare better in this respect in the author's own country. Thus the presumption is in favor of an English edition of Wordsworth, rather than an American reprint; and also of an American edition of Lowell, rather than an English reprint. There may, of course, be exceptions to this general rule.

2. Editor. One of the questions in regard to the editor is whether he has made a real contribution to the apprehension of the content of the author. Thus, Prof. A. C. Fraser's edition of Bishop Berkeley's "Works" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871, 4v.), carries additional value to the reader, from the point of view which we have been considering, since Dr. Fraser's own editing is most judicious. But, on the other hand, anomalous as it may seem, we also sometimes have to inquire whether the editor has not made too much of a contribution to the material of the author, whether, in brief, the editor is not unduly in evidence, and to the overshadowing of the author. It is on David Masson's "Life" of John Milton that one of Mr. Lowell's driest comments is made. In the course of the biographer's diffuse narrative of the political development of the 17th century, his history, to quote Mr. Lowell, is "interrupted now and then by an unexpected apparition of Milton" himself.¹ This, however, is true to a very much less extent of Masson's very ably edited

¹Lowell's *Among My Books*, 2d ser. p. 254.

edition of "The Poetical Works of John Milton" (London: Macmillan & Co., 1874, 3v.). This fault, however, is sometimes not an inherent one, but is solely due to the point of view. Thus no one can charge Dr. Furness in his "Variorum Edition" of Shakespeare, or Professor Skeat in his edition of Chaucer, with irrelevancy or lack of perspective, although it is perhaps even more true here than in Milton's case that the poet only occasionally emerges from the mass of "tributary material." From the point of view of the literature of knowledge, however, this is not only allowable, but is most welcome; and this minute comparison is the treatment most emphatically desired by the student of textual criticism. For precisely these reasons, however, these are not the editions of Shakespeare or Chaucer to stand on the shelves of the collection which we have in mind. There is another point of view which is no more appropriate to the purpose in mind, though for a different reason. Here, for instance, is an admirable volume published by D. C. Heath & Co., entitled, "Tennyson's 'The Princess,' edited with introduction and interpretative notes, by A. J. George," of which a high authority writes: "It is a model of what a textbook in literature should be." And yet, because it is a "textbook," it has no place here. Shall then the copy of an author who is himself deemed suitable for inclusion in this company be destitute of even a single footnote, or annotation, or appendix? By no means, but the librarian or the reader will, or should, at once "feel" the difference, when these latter have become the fundamen-

tals. What has been said thus far has presupposed a difference (as regards the editor and his work), in point of view only, and not in quality of editorial work. But there are incompetent editors, as well as competent ones, and this difference supplies another basis for discrimination, in the choice of an edition. Fortunately this question also, as well as the question of including a given author, is one which is likely to have been settled, for the most part, by time.

Closely allied with the question of editor and editions is the question of translator and translations. It is apparently not feasible, in planning for an ideal collection of this kind, to confine it to authors who have written in English, since a library which should exclude Homer, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes, Molière and Goethe would have done much to eclipse its own glory. Nor is it well to limit the representation of such authors as these to the original texts of their works, in the languages in which they were written. Side by side with the best original text should stand the ideally best translation of it into English, and its selection involves a question which is not always easy to solve. It may perhaps suffice to say, however, that an ideal English translation must lack neither accuracy, nor the ability to reproduce in great measure the spirit of the original, nor the subtle power of carrying the charm of the author to the heart of the reader. Sometimes it happens that parts only of an author are found in an English translation (as Aristotle); and sometimes indeed, the author may almost be said to be lacking altogether,

in readable English (as Cicero). In this latter instance, he must be reluctantly omitted from the list, except in the original.

3. Size. This question of size has two aspects, namely, length and thickness. To speak, however, from the point of view of the books as they stand on the shelves, these dimensions will be known as "height" and "width." Let us take the shorter dimension first, namely, that variously known as "thickness" or "width," which depends on the number of sheets (or "leaves") bound into a single volume. So far as symmetry is concerned, a great number of leaves can sometimes be employed to advantage, if the other dimension be large in proportion, but, so far as ease of handling is concerned, the librarian may safely take two inches as a maximum thickness (representing a maximum number of pages which must vary, of course, as the paper used is of greater or less thickness, from about 450 to 650 pages). On the other hand, a minimum is less easy to prescribe. It is true that, so far as both symmetry and ease of handling are concerned, one would rather have a volume which is not thinner than half an inch (as compared with a height of 8 inches), but we must, of course, bear in mind that the ruling principle, in this field which we are now considering, is exclusion, rather than inclusion, and consequently, not be inclined to complain if the writer's contribution to the world's literature be thin while it is weighty.

But it is the other dimension which most frequently constitutes a practical question in this connection, namely, "length" or "height." Instead of being

connected with the number of pages, it is connected with the size and dimensions of the printed page, and the margin of paper outside of the same. The terms which are still used to describe these varying sizes (folios, quartos, octavos, duodecimos, etc.) were derived, it is true, originally, from fold, in binding, but, for our purpose here, they need not stand for anything but a size difference. This is almost universally found to be the principle of classification in the printed catalogs of two centuries ago and more. . . . We may well be thankful for one, at least, of the tendencies of the later years, in book making, in spite of the dignity and charm of the ponderous folios. Even Dr. Johnson, more than a hundred years ago, expressed the exact truth, when he said:

“Books that you may carry to the fire, and hold readily in your hand,¹ are the most useful after all.”²

¹The weight of a book, as well as its length and breadth is a very practical consideration as regards convenience of handling. It is sometimes a question how to reconcile so conflicting considerations as those of sufficiently large type, and a not too thin paper, and at the same time bring it into sufficiently small compass, whether in one volume or more. It sometimes happens, moreover, that the entirely laudable attempt to supply a work to the reader in one volume, rather than two, results in a volume a little too heavy for convenient handling. It must reluctantly be confessed that this is the one fault of at least the American reprint of that admirable edition of Thackeray, the “Biographical edition.” In such an author as Shakespeare, the question of a “one-play-a-volume” edition becomes an important one; and among the editions of this description the preference must apparently be given to the delightful little “Temple edition,” in spite of its somewhat extreme diminutiveness.

²Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, p. 197.

There is a happy mean in this matter, and the books, as marshaled on the shelves of our ideal collection, will oftener need to possess dignity than piquancy; yet a liberal range between a medium octavo and a large duodecimo is likely oftenest to produce satisfaction. This is a point which may be better appreciated when considered in connection with the question of "Type," since legibility sometimes seems to demand some concession in size. These suggestions ought not to be understood as expressing the desirableness of a dead level of uniformity. On this head more will be said under "Binding," but even here the principle is not without its importance, especially as regards shape as well as size. Such variations from the familiar sizes as the "small quarto," so-called, and even the "long quarto," in exceptional instances, are to be welcomed.

4. Type. Undoubtedly the foremost requisite, though not the only one, to be considered under the head of type, is legibility. To be available in the way which we are considering, a book must be read; to be read, it must be legible; and to be legible, it must, for one thing, be printed in type which is sufficiently large. Let printers and publishers issue, as "curiosities," as many "miniature editions" as they like, but these have no connection with the uses which we are considering. Here again, it is the golden mean, in size, which we have in mind. And yet the size of type alone is not sufficient to secure legibility to a book; if the matter of spacing and leading be neglected. If, moreover, we pass to

the question of design, or shape, we find a quality which may be variously characterized as "elegance," or as "accuracy," according to the speaker's point of view. With William Morris, the shape of the type was a matter of so great seriousness that the term, "elegance," though more frequently employed by writers in general, would fall far short of expressing the real conditions. To see the subject of design in typography, from Mr. Morris's point of view,¹ one will need to have gone to school to him, or rather to have learned in the same school with him, steeped as he was in the lore of the printer's art, for the last four centuries, and especially the earliest of these four centuries.

What the varying proportions of the four margins should be, depends, as above indicated, on certain well understood principles of symmetry. And yet this avoidance of the error of margin never resulted,

¹His position has been well expressed by Mr. Crane, as follows:

"Mr. Morris adopts the useful canon in printing, that the true page is what the open book displays—what is generally termed a double page. He considers them practically as two columns of type, necessarily separate owing to the construction of the book, but together, as it lies open, forming a page of type, only divided by the narrow margin where the leaves are inserted in the back of the covers. We thus get the *recto* and the *verso* pages or columns, each with their distinctive proportions of margin, as they turn to the right or the left from the center of the book—the narrowest margins being naturally inwards and at the top, the broadest those outwards and at the foot, which latter should be deepest of all. It may be called the *handle* of the book, and there is reason in the broad margin, though also gracious to the eye, since the hand may hold the book without covering any of the type."—*Of the Decorative Illustration of Books, Old and New*, by Walter Crane, p. 194.

in William Morris's books, in the even greater error of an illegible inside end of a printed line (on either page), "pinched in," in the too close stitching of the book. To avoid this, of course, an absolutely perfect "roll" of the edges of the sheets, along the book's back, was one of the essentials; but this perfect roll William Morris's books always had. To see what has just been indicated, to perfection, one needs to examine one of the larger of the Kelmscott Press volumes, or at least one of average size, but it is obvious enough even in one of the smallest of them all, namely, his "Gothic architecture" (1893). There is a possibility that the flexible glue which has come into use, within a few years, in some of the American publishing houses, will facilitate a more general return to correct conditions here.

5. Paper and Ink. In an age when even municipal record books are found to be made from paper which is crumbling into dust after only a few years' wear, it would be futile to expect our printed books to be free from the intrusion of unworthy material. "The paper maker," indeed, is one of the chief offenders¹ pilloried in Henry Stevens's vigorous little publication, entitled, "Who spoils our new English books?"

¹"It is manifest," says Mr. Stevens [p. 10], "that there are no less than 10 parties directly interested in this question, and that one, several, or all of them may justly be accused if not convicted as participants in the decadence of book making in England.

"They are, (1) the author, (2) the publisher, (3) the printer, (4) the reader, (5) the compositor, (6) the pressman or machinist, (7) the paper maker, (8) the ink maker, (9) the bookbinder, and (10) the last not least, the consumer, often ignorant and careless of the beauty and proportions of his books—a great sinner!"

asked and answered by Henry Stevens." (London: H. N. Stevens, 1884.) "Cheapness," says Mr. Stevens, "has succeeded to quality, and as long as our people know no better, the paper maker and the publisher will cram them." [p. 25.] There is abundant cause for Mr. Stevens's complaint, in the widely extended use of paper which is bad and worthless, absolutely. Yet there is, perhaps, even more occasion for regret, in the very general use of varieties of paper which are good in themselves, but are unsuited to the use which is to be made of them. A certain quality of paper, for instance, is frequently lauded, by the publisher of a book in which it is used, as being "heavy," yet this "clayey" quality will very seriously impair the success of the binder's best efforts. Again, one will constantly find "a high finish" claimed as one of the great merits of the paper of which a book is made, yet this is a condition which is almost fatal to the best results so far as the type and the ink are concerned, that is to say, fatal to the book as a "printed book," rather than as "a picture book."

This brings us at once to the question of illustration, which has to be faced sooner or later, in any scheme for an ideal collection like this. As every one knows, the halftone pictures which are now so common, require a "high finish" paper. If, therefore, we start with the assumption that these halftone illustrations are to be freely used, in the text of the work, there is no chance for further discussion. "High finish" paper we must have, for the entire book, unless we consent to do as is done in some of

the monthly periodicals, and use, first, a high finish paper for an entire signature where illustrations will be used in the text, and then a paper of different surface and different tint, for a signature in which it is certain that no illustrations will be used in the text. The result, in this case, is incongruous. As an alternative the publisher of the book might insist that the illustrations must be in every instance full page plates, and also, in every instance, separate insets. There would then be no clashing of uses and aims. Another serious question is whether it is possible to dispense with illustrations altogether.

To ask this last question is to gain a somewhat more definite idea of the purpose and scope of the "standard library" which we have in mind than would, perhaps, be possible otherwise. Should the "illustrated book" be kept in mind as an ideal? Let us turn to our list, and open it almost anywhere. Here are the names of Aeschylus, Ariosto, Arnold, (Matthew), Augustine, Bacon and Browning; or, if we turn to another portion of the alphabetical list, Scott, Shakespeare, Shelley, Sidney, and Sophocles. Now it is plain that some of our authors lend themselves readily to illustration; and there are others, moreover, who have in certain special instances been most worthily illustrated, as Scott, in the very beautiful "Abbotsford edition." But can it be said that most of the others will be at all helped—for the purpose which we have in mind—by elaborate illustrations? Will Aeschylus, or will Matthew Arnold, or will Shelley? Dante's name will perhaps occur to every one who has ever seen Doré's illustrations; and

there could not be a better instance, indeed, than this (Dore's Dante), of the style of edition which most emphatically does *not* belong in our ideal collection. "No book admitted unless without illustrations" will doubtless not be a sound principle; but if we say, "No book admitted in which illustration is the predominating motive," we shall not go far wrong.

Let me quote in this connection, from a very admirable article by Prof. E. B. Titchener, of Cornell University, a pupil at Oxford, of Jowett and Pater and Nettleship:

"I believe," says Professor Titchener, "that the illustrated books—I mean, the editions of standard works, bedizened with process illustrations of different kinds, and advertised as 'gift books,'—must and will be done away with. Is it anything less than impertinence to an old friend to turn him out upon the world decked in these modern furbelows? What we want is himself, as we have known him."¹

Having decided that our choice of paper is to be determined by the requirements of a printed page, let us inquire what surface of paper is ideally best suited to taking ink, whether by the intaglio processes or the relief processes.² The difference between them lies in the fact that the intaglio processes (as etching, copperplate and steel plate) take the ink which has been pressed into the depressions or fur-

¹Professor Titchener's article is printed in full in *Book Reviews*, Feb., 1895.

²See pp. 18, 19 of Theodore L. DeVinne's volume, *The Invention of Printing*, for several illustrations, graphically representing to the eye the distinctions above indicated.

rows of the plate, while the relief processes (as half-tone, wood engraving, or typography proper) take the ink which is spread on the elevations rising from the plate (or the shoulder of the type). When a half-tone plate is used with an open-surface paper, one which is distinctively porous, the ink blurs and does not reproduce with clearness the multitude of fine, crossed lines which should appear on the paper, and which are very perfectly brought out on the close surface or high finish paper. When, on the contrary, the metal type of the printed book, which represents simple, elevated surfaces, rather than a multitude of fine lines, is brought in contact with the "close surface" or "high finish" paper, it does not find there the yielding surface which it requires for making a sharp, distinct impression. Let the same type, however, be brought in contact with the paper used in William Morris's books, above cited, and the impression is a beautifully sharp and distinct one.

To be sure, this would not be the case if the ink itself were not of highest quality; and there is no room for doubt that in ink, no less than in paper, there has been marked deterioration in modern times. To quote once more from Mr. Stevens [page 26]:

"The first printing inks ever used, as early as about the middle of the 15th century, are still bright, clear and beautiful. The first printed Bible, the first Psalter, and the first Classics are all to this day conspicuous for the beauty and permanency of their inks. Compare them with almost any of the inks now produced, and you will readily see what a falling off there has been."

It should be added that, while this is true, as a general proposition, yet if the great mass of modern books be placed in comparison with one of William Morris's volumes, from the Kelmscott Press, or with one of Mr. Updike's, from the Merrymount Press, or even with this little book of Mr. Stevens (above cited), from the Chiswick Press, these latter gain immeasurably by the comparison.

It should be noticed that, even so far as mere legibility is concerned, this question of the ink and its use is an important factor in the problem. Nor is a lack of legibility in the ink wholly a matter of its blackness, since it is also due to the constant use which is required, by which the corners and edges are gradually broken off from the metal type, and by which they lose their sharp, distinct outline. The same defect is, of course, noticed with stereotype plates as with the separate types. The leisurely conditions under which the earlier printers worked, permitting the minutest attention to the type, are not so well adapted to the demands of the present day, with its power presses.

So far as "first editions" are concerned, it is not the first edition, as such, that would be desired for this ideal collection, but we may well desire a first impression, rather than a 10,000th impression, or one taken after the plates or type have become worn and battered; as much, indeed, as would be the case with an etching or an engraving.

6. Binding. The main requisite under the head of binding is appropriateness to the purpose in view, whether leather, vellum, cloth, or even paper. Indeed,

the only objection to paper, as a satisfactory exterior for a book, is that it does not permit the book to stand easily in its place on the shelves, nor to be used constantly, without detriment. It is in cloth that the most of the books now in the possession of our libraries have first made their appearance among us; and a cloth cover, when at its best, is not a thing to be despised. That it is capable of being made a hideous deformity is eloquently testified by the pretentious covers of many a well remembered volume, chiefly of the "subscription book" class. . . .

Again, a cloth cover is not to be despised,¹ even from the point of view of durability and strength. When cloth fails as a cover, it will perhaps generally be found to be due to the accompaniments of sewing, or of grass cloth hinges, rather than to the cloth itself as a material; and in recent years cloth is coming nearer to receiving its due as a material. Time, indeed, is the test of merit; and many readers can recall books now standing on library shelves, copies of Hawthorne or Thackeray or Longfellow, in the familiar brown cloth covers of Ticknor and Fields, in which they were issued more than 40 years ago.

I have spoken of details of sewing as being sometimes neglected in cloth books, conspicuously so in

¹There is still another reason why a cloth-bound edition, particularly of a work no longer new, may sometimes be preferable in a collection like this, namely, the fact that it is more likely to preserve the original printed matter, in its integrity. "Who can be absolutely sure,"—to quote the pertinent inquiry of Mr. Koopman, the librarian of Brown University, "that a volume rebound in leather may not at some stage of its rebinding have had a half-title, or even other leaves, left out, at the discretion of the bookbinder?"

the English three-volume novels which are plainly meant to be re clothed in leather at the earliest possible moment; and conspicuously not thus neglected in the case of the books of Ticknor and Fields above mentioned; but there is another point which has usually been nearly as much neglected. This is the kind of surface which the cloth cover presents. After having tried nearly every conceivable variation in the surface of the book covers, as well as every possible variety of cloth, the publisher now appears to have learned a lesson from the binder, as regards the use of buckram. Buckram is doubtless more familiar as a material in which to rebind a book, sometimes "full buckram," as in the case of bound volumes of newspapers or records, but more commonly "half buckram," for books of ordinary size. In the last 30 years much has been learned both as to the most desirable varieties of it, and the most desirable methods of treatment; and the book publisher now who issues a book (in its original form), in the full English buckram, with glazed surface,¹ (a surface not requiring a label, but permitting the stamping of the lettering directly upon it), such as the illustrated edition of John Fiske's "American Revolution" (published by Houghton Mifflin Co.), or the "Essays" of Mr. Arthur C. Benson (Macmillan), is profiting by this experience.

Color is by no means a minor point as regards

¹An additional advantage of the glazed surface for a buckram binding is its protection against the dust which so porous a surface might otherwise absorb, yet anything which will chemically affect the fabric should be avoided.

cloth-bound books. Bearing in mind the fact that the title "lettered" on the back is intended to be read without difficulty, and bearing in mind also the fact that this lettering is in gilt in nine cases out of ten, it is surprising that so few publishers have attempted to understand the color scheme. Out of all the possible backgrounds on which gilt letters may be placed, only a fraction of them will be found to supply a legible combination. The most illegible as backgrounds, are drab, orange, yellow, white, and some of the browns verging on an orange. All of these are excellent colors in themselves; and it is, therefore, the more to be regretted that they are not good in this combination. Gilt lettering, on the other hand, stands out with exceptional distinctness on dark blue. Blacks, browns, greens, and all of the reds except magenta, seem to be open to no objections. White, which inevitably becomes soiled in the reader's hands, is sometimes employed, to gain the advantage of a lettering in black instead of gilt, but there are other colors which will supply a good background for a black lettering, among them gray, drab, greenish brown, and reddish brown.

There remain to be considered the older materials for binding, animal substances in both instances, namely, the skin bindings, as vellum, pigskin, etc., and the more common leather bindings, as goat, sheep, calf, and others.

Any one who has used vellum for his books, either for the whole book or for the back and corners only, must feel like wondering that any other material should ever be thought of, except, of course, from

practical considerations, such as soiling. Indeed, the ideal library might perhaps be described as limited to a few such authors as Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Dante, printed by an Aldus or an Elzevir, and bound in vellum. But this impracticable ideal would be making the collection a more exclusive one than any of us are ready to advocate, and probably no one will live to see the day when vellum shall return to general use.

Of the leather bindings, one only, goat, has been proved to possess great durability. We may in general consider that the library's most available materials for rebinding, as distinguished from the coverings in which the books come from the dealer, will be either vellum, goat, or buckram. Here is something over which the custodian of the books can exercise some control. He can not see to it that the author of the book composes in an ideal manner, nor that the publisher issues the book on suitable paper, printed with suitable ink and with unexceptionable type; but he can make sure that, when placed in the binder's hands, for rebinding, it is accurately made up, so far as assembling and registering are concerned; that, in trimming, the proper symmetry of the various margins is preserved, and that no more margin than the least allowance is trimmed away; that the sewing is done intelligently and durably; that the material of the cover is properly chosen, both as to quality and as to color; that the lettering is so studied as to avoid the defects already noted above; and that, in brief, the book at once impresses the reader, both when standing on

the shelf, and when taken down and opened, as an honest piece of work.

Marbling of edges has little to commend it, but the utilitarian consideration of protection from dust by gilding the top edge, and that only, has an obvious force. The question of the desirableness of uniformity has an undoubted interest. Uniformity is plainly desirable in the different volumes of one and the same set, as a set of Dryden's "Works," but uniformity for the sake of uniformity, in the collection as a whole, is not merely unnecessary, but a thing to be positively regretted. It will, on the contrary, be a pleasure to see on the shelves, side by side, a set of Dante in fitting white vellum; then a set of Dickens in the familiar green cloth covers of Chapman and Hall of some 50 years ago; then an old copy of Erasmus, in the dingy brown calfskin in which it originally appeared, and then a set of Euripides in red goat. Nor is a variation in size a complete bar to one's enjoyment of the collection; and one can even see with complacency a copy of Ariosto in tall octavo form, while next to him stands the set of Lord Bacon's works, in considerably smaller volumes. Variety in lettering also may even constitute a welcome feature of the books, some sets with labels on the back alternating with others which have the titles gilded or stamped in. In rebinding, to be sure, it will be well to dispense with labels, since they have been found to have no real permanency. No haste, certainly, should be used, in reducing the entire assemblage of books to a uniform and up-to-date appearance. A "dingy" exterior, so far from

being cause for barring out a set, may even in some instances be valued as a mark of individuality, yet it should not be forgotten that one main object of the collection is to attract and win the reader.

Six points of selection have been named above, yet exceptionally happy indeed will be the day when we shall ever find all six of these conditions complied with in the case of one and the same book, when, for example, the text of the work is supplied in its integrity; when the judicious editor has supplied neither too much nor too little in his treatment of the text; when the size of the book is all that can be desired, for convenience of use, and by way of appealing to the reader's desire to handle it; when the type is at once the perfection of legibility and of grace; when the paper and ink reproduce the best traditions of an earlier age; and when the binding is substantial, tasteful, well stamped and lettered, and in every way appropriate. More often than not, however, it is a compromise that will be demanded of the librarian, in his choice of an edition, and he is forced to some such conclusion as, for instance, that, while the binding leaves indeed much to be desired, yet the text is certainly an unapproachable one, and the type far better than the average; or that the editor has done his work strikingly well, in spite of the shortcomings of the printer and paper maker.